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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard
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"Saying it like it is!"

What is this world coming to these days? What would incite a person to plan such a plot as entering a crowded movie theater and open fire on the movie-goers? What kind of a nut-bag (alleged) would shoot kids watching the new Batman movie? 12 killed and 71 wounded. Pure insanity as far as I'm concerned, but this was a cruel and calculated act of terror.

There are too many of these acts of violence happening these days. I just can't imagine what would motivate people to do such things. I'm guessing many of these people feel "justified" with these atrocities, but I'm also guessing that these stories provide psychiatrists with a lifelong research project!

Amazing. Makes listening to the Romney and Obama ads taking shots at each other a walk in the park. Ironic.

Until next time...

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Activision Could Buy Itself Back!
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!  
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Activision Could Buy Itself Back from Vivendi

As news continues to emerge regarding the ongoing saga of Vivendi's

potential sale of Activision Blizzard, it now appears that the buyer could be Activision Blizzard itself. According to The Wall Street Journal, one option that Activision Blizzard and Vivendi have each considered is for Activision Blizzard to buy back all or part of Vivendi's majority stake.

Since Vivendi acquired Activision Blizzard in 2008, the French company has held a 61% stake in Activision Blizzard, currently worth upwards of \$8 billion (the total market value of Activision Blizzard is presently estimated at \$13.4 billion). While Microsoft and Time Warner were among buyers approached about a potential sale, Vivendi was last reported to be finding little enthusiasm in selling its stake and could instead opt to allow Activision Blizzard to reacquire its own stock.

Activision Blizzard currently has approximately \$3 billion worth of cash available with little to no debt, and would likely have to borrow funds or bring private equity or other outside investors into the fold to help finance a transaction, according to the Journal. This would likely be a last resort for Vivendi, as the company reportedly believes it could sell the shares at a premium to an outside investor. Vivendi is seeking to sell Activision Blizzard in order to offset its recent placement under negative credit watch by financial services agency Standard & Poor's, and is also said to be considering selling Activision Blizzard shares on the open market if it can't find a buyer.

Vivendi's trouble selling the publisher is reportedly due to the fact that few companies approached have the cash available to find the \$8 billion purchase. Analysts also say that Vivendi faces headwinds from makers of cheaper online and mobile games, and there are plenty of pros and cons for companies like Microsoft in terms of a potential sale.

Vivendi has made very few public comments about a sale, saying simply "We continue to look at all the options when approached. If the sale of Activision Blizzard proves to be less than fruitful, Vivendi could simply choose to keep its 61% stake and sell off other assets instead (the company also owns Universal Music Group, French pay TV channel Canal+ and various international telecommunications companies).

Vivendi will report its earnings for the first half of its fiscal year on August 30th, at which point concrete information about the sale of Activision Blizzard or other assets is expected to be revealed. Activision Blizzard, meanwhile, will reveal its second quarter results on August 2nd.

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Marissa Mayer's Top 3 Challenges as Yahoo CEO

Like a lot of math geeks, Marissa Mayer enjoys tackling complex problems. She will find plenty of those as the latest CEO at Yahoo. The troubled company has turned into a vexing brain-twister as its financial

performance has steadily deteriorated even though it still boasts one of the Internet's biggest audiences and best-known brands.

Yahoo announced Tuesday another lackluster set of financial results in the second quarter. The company earned \$227 million, a 4 percent decrease from a year ago. In the last five years, Yahoo's stock has tumbled 41 percent. It closed Tuesday at \$15.60.

Mayer, 37, will try to reverse the financial malaise as Yahoo tries to match the growth of rivals Google and Facebook Inc. Both companies have been prospering as advertisers spent more money on Internet advertising.

Consider some of the challenges that greeted Mayer Tuesday as she took over Yahoo's helm after a highly successful 13-year career at Google.

Mayer's to-do list probably will start with deciding the fate of Ross Levinsohn, who had made a positive impression among analysts during his two-month stint as interim CEO. He took over after the mid-May ouster of Yahoo's previous leader, Scott Thompson, who left amid a flap over misinformation on his official biography.

Levinsohn had envisioned Yahoo's website becoming the hottest spot on the Internet to get a mixture of exclusive content and material produced by a wide range of other media outlets. He was particularly focused on improving the quality of Yahoo's video offerings, figuring more people would stick around the company's website if it was serving up professionally produced news and entertainment clips. That in turn would help Yahoo sell more online advertising and revive revenue growth.

Mayer has previously worked with Levinsohn while she was overseeing Google's Internet search team and he was running the digital operations at Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. In 2006, News Corp.'s MySpace social network struck a lucrative advertising partnership with Google that was widely seen as a coup for Levinsohn.

But it's not clear if those past ties will be enough to smooth things over with Levinsohn, who has now been snubbed twice for the Yahoo CEO job in less than a year. He was also interested in running Yahoo after the company fired Carol Bartz as CEO last September, but didn't even get an interim tryout that time. Yahoo instead relied on Tim Morse, its chief financial officer, as its temporary CEO.

Levinsohn, 48, was widely seen as the leading candidate to be permanent CEO this time. So being passed over for a younger outsider such as Mayer may have bruised his ego.

In a Monday interview, Mayer declined to discuss her plans for Levinsohn.

Some analysts believe the two could form a powerful combination at Yahoo if Mayer can win Levinsohn over. That's because Mayer specializes in developing products and managing how online services interact with users while Levinsohn's strong suit is negotiating media partnerships and selling advertising.

Whether Levinsohn stays or leaves, Mayer will have to answer a question that has stumped the four other full-time CEOs that have steered Yahoo during the past five years: Where does Yahoo Inc. fit in an Internet and mobile market that is increasingly tilting toward Google Inc., Apple Inc., Facebook Inc. and Amazon.com Inc.?

As Mayer ponders this one, she is likely to draw on her experience as one of Google's top executives. She probably knows Google's weaknesses, as well its strengths. And her perch at Google may have given her a better vantage point on the potential vulnerabilities at Apple, Facebook and Amazon.com.

Yahoo is trying to build on its monthly audience of 700 million users and develop more effective ways to connect with people on smartphones and mobile devices. Mayer's insights could help identify revenue-generating opportunities where Yahoo has the best chance to succeed.

In a Monday interview, Mayer said it was still too early to discuss her vision for Yahoo. "My first order of business is to meet with the senior leadership team and get a product road map," she said, adding that she is confident she can make Yahoo's services "even more innovative and inspiring in the future."

Once she draws up a coherent strategy, Mayer will need to find the right people to execute on it. That means she will need to recruit elite computer programmers, a breed that has been more inclined to work at Google, Facebook and Apple. Yahoo's morale suffered another blow in April when Thompson announced plans to lay off 2,000 people, or 14 percent of the work force.

Mayer's hiring, though, may help reshape the largely negative perceptions of Yahoo on Wall Street and in Silicon Valley. Her track record at Google and her intellect gives her credibility in Silicon Valley, where Yahoo's Sunnyvale, Calif. headquarters are located. She specialized in artificial intelligence while getting her master's degree at Stanford University in 1999 and is conversant in the arcane vernacular of computer coders.

As she tries to nurture Yahoo, Mayer will be taking on a huge challenge that figures to test her ability to find the right balance between her job and home life. Shortly after the news broke about her move to Yahoo, Mayer announced she is pregnant. The baby boy's due date is in early October, just before Yahoo will be reporting how it fared under Mayer's leadership.

#### Online Woes Spark First Ever Loss for Microsoft

Microsoft has posted its first ever loss, shedding \$492 million in the fourth quarter due to a massive \$6.2 billion write-down to reflect the slump in value of its online operations.

Microsoft still recorded an annual profit of \$16.98 billion and said Thursday the results reflected "solid revenue growth and rigorous cost discipline."

The computing giant had announced earlier this month it would take the \$6.2 billion write-down, which is required by accounting rules and does not affect the company's cash position.

Taking out one-time charges, Microsoft showed a profit of 73 cents a share, well ahead of Wall Street expectations of 62 cents.

Revenue also beat expectations, rising four percent to \$18 billion in the quarter to June 30. For the full year, revenues were up five percent at \$73.7 billion.

"We delivered record fourth quarter and annual revenue, and we're fast approaching the most exciting launch season in Microsoft history," said chief executive Steve Ballmer.

The company is preparing to release Windows 8, the next version of its market leading operating system and a new tablet computer, while making an aggressive move into smartphones.

Microsoft shares rose 2.14 percent to \$31.32 in after-hours electronic trades. The fourth quarter losses stemmed from a charge reflecting a write-down related to the 2007 acquisition of digital advertising firm aQuantive.

Microsoft announced the deal in August 2007 in a bid to seize market share from rivals Yahoo! and Google in the lucrative market that tailors advertising to Internet search results.

Windows remains the dominant platform for personal computers, but it has lost ground to Google and Apple in newer devices, which use rival operating systems.

The company's search and online services have struggled, but its Xbox gaming system has become the hottest in the industry.

In its latest results, business services accounted for \$6.3 billion in revenue and \$4.1 billion in operating profits. Windows showed an operating profit of \$2.4 billion on \$4.1 billion in revenue.

But the entertainment unit showed an operating loss of \$263 million on revenues of nearly \$1.8 billion. And online services suffered a whopping loss of \$6.6 billion, taking the hit from the write-down, and had revenues of just \$735 million.

"For the company the size of Microsoft it is a relative blip on the radar," said Forrester analyst Michael Greene.

"The question is whether they learn from the prior mistakes, and Microsoft has a pattern of doing that."

The write-down may indicate that the company is shifting its strategy on earning revenue from online services to focus more on partnerships.

The earnings figures overall showed Microsoft is under pressure to hit the mark with sales of Windows 8 and its next-generation Office software, according to independent Silicon Valley analyst Rob Enderle.

Windows 8 will be publicly available on October 26.

It "is simply the biggest deal for this company in at least 17 years," Microsoft chief Ballmer said last week, referring to the time since the launch of the game-changing Windows 95 operating system.

"It's the glue; it's the foundation of everything Microsoft is built on."

The latest version of the operating system that is the norm for personal computers will also be used on many smartphones and tablet computers, including Microsoft's own Surface tablet.

The company has gone on record stating that Surface tablets would hit the market when Windows 8 become publicly available.

## A UK Judge Is Forcing Apple To Publish On Its Website That Samsung Didn't Copy Apple

A judge in Britain is forcing Apple to publicly acknowledge that Samsung didn't copy the iPad, according to a report by Bloomberg.

A judge has ordered Apple to post a notice on its website and in "several" British newspapers and magazines highlighting a recent ruling that Samsung didn't copy the iPad.

Apple must leave that notice up on its website for the next six months. Ouch!

Apple lost a case against Samsung in Britain earlier this month, as the judge ruled that Samsung's Galaxy Tab tablets weren't cool enough to be confused with the iPad.

## Microsoft's Windows 8 To Hit Release Target

Microsoft Corp said on Wednesday its new, touch-friendly Windows 8 operating system will be on sale October 26, almost exactly three years after the launch of Windows 7.

That means customers will be able to upgrade old PCs to the new system on that date, or buy new hardware with the software already installed at stores such as Best Buy.

The company generally does not announce public release dates until close to the event, but has often stated that it aims for a new version of Windows every three years.

Microsoft said earlier this month Windows 8 would be released by the end of October.

## EU Regulators Investigating Microsoft's Windows 8

EU antitrust regulators are investigating whether Microsoft blocks computer makers from installing rival web browsers on its upcoming Windows 8 operating system following complaints from several companies.

The issue is part of an investigation opened on Tuesday into the world No. 1 software company's failure to offer users a choice of rival web browsers which it had agreed with regulators three years ago, a spokesman for the European Commission said.

The EU watchdog is also looking into allegations that Microsoft does not provide access to complete interfaces (APIs) for non-default browsers in Windows 8, spokesman Antoine Colombani said on Wednesday.

He said the investigation will also focus on charges that Microsoft allows

only its own Internet Explorer browser to be installed on devices running Windows 8 on Windows RT tablets with British chipmaker ARM's chips.

Colombani declined to identify the companies which made the allegations. Microsoft made no comment.

Windows 8 is due out around October. Windows RT refers to the operating system for tablets where the other players are Apple and Google.

Microsoft's computer partners include Lenovo Group , Acer and Asustek Computer.

#### Microsoft: No Office 2013 for Mac Planned

Microsoft unveiled the latest version of its productivity suite earlier this week, which focuses on touch optimizations and deeper integration with Microsoft's cloud-based services. Office 2013 was shown off at great length for the Windows 8 operating system, but it was curious to some that no mention of OS X was made during Microsoft's press conference. According to The Verge, the explanation is simple: Microsoft currently has no plans to release Office 2013 for Mac. We haven't announced the next release of Office for Mac, a Microsoft spokesperson told the site. Microsoft does reportedly have plans to bring new SkyDrive cloud storage features to Office 2011 for Mac in a future update.

#### YouTube Unveils Face-Blurring Tool

Video website YouTube unveiled on Wednesday a way for users to automatically blur human faces in videos they upload, a feature that would help protect the identities of political dissidents, YouTube parent Google Inc. said.

Once known more as a repository for fuzzy, home-made cat videos, YouTube has become a growing destination for slick, highly produced entertainment and serious news content. Earlier this week, a study by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism said amateur "citizen journalism" footage from events such as the 2011 tsunami in Japan were some of the most-watched clips on YouTube.

In recent months YouTube has hosted dozens of videos from the rebellion in Syria, often uploaded by rebels seeking to publicize their struggle. But the videos have also revealed the identity of rebel fighters.

"Whether you want to share sensitive protest footage without exposing the faces of the activists involved, or share the winning point in your 8-year-old's basketball game without broadcasting the children's faces to the world, our face blurring technology is a first step towards providing visual anonymity for video on YouTube," YouTube said in a blog post Wednesday.

The feature also allows for the original copy of the uploaded video to be deleted. Videos may also be kept private.

"YouTube is proud to be a destination where people worldwide come to share



their stories, including activists," YouTube said.

#### Warning: Fake Facebook Photo Notifications Contain Malware

Be careful about opening emails that claim you have been tagged in a Facebook photo, because they may actually be malware, according to a security expert.

Sophos's outlined the threat on Wednesday. The company's SophosLabs intercepted a "spammed-out email campaign" which was designed to spread malware. Sophos provided the following example:

The blog notes that the email address above misspells "Facebook" as "Faceboook." The link takes the user to a malicious iFrame script, which exposes the user's computer to malware. However, within four seconds, the user's browser is directed to a presumably innocent Facebook page like the one below to act as a smokescreen.

The lab recommends checking the "Facebook" email addresses closely in emails and hover your mouse over the link, at which point you should see it doesn't go to a Facebook page.

#### Uh Oh, Facebook Is Losing Its Popularity

Facebook today saw a drop in two main metrics of popularity: number of friends and likability, which presents a particular problem for the social network because popularity is what it sells. Over the last month, Facebook has not only seen a 1.1 percent drop in U.S. users, but a decline in 14 of the 23 countries where it has 50 percent penetration, found an analyst using tracking software. Beyond numbers though, another metric, the American Consumer Satisfaction Index, found over the last year the users that have stayed are less satisfied. Facebook scored a 61, which not only represents over a 7 percent decrease from one year ago, but puts it well below Google+.

The user contraction news was enough to put Facebook stock below the 30 mark - above which it had stabilized over the last month - because people are exactly what Facebook sells. If we learned anything from the recent sale of Digg, which went for the dismal price of \$500,000, it's that a social network is only as valuable as its users. Its product value doesn't go beyond that, as The Atlantic's Alexis Madrigal explained following the Digg acquisition. "There is one clear lesson from Digg's sale: the technology that powered a once-massive social network is worth about \$500,000. All the rest of the value derives from the people that use it," he wrote.

The same goes for Facebook. "Social networking companies are not technology companies as much as they are community companies," continues Madrigal. Unlike Google, which provides a service via technology that other companies can't match (think: Search or Gmail) Facebook doesn't provide special technology you can't get anywhere else. In fact, at times, its tech pales in comparison to newer innovations. (Think: Instagram, which it had to buy to avoid competition.) What Facebook has that others don't is popularity. When the people start leaving, or start getting mad enough

that they think about leaving a once multi-million (or billion, in Facebook's case) dollar company doesn't have value for users, who come there to connect with friends, or for advertisers, who at this point come to Facebook for its large user base.

A 1.1 percent decline in the U.S. doesn't mean the end for Facebook, but they can't let it turn into a trend. Getting bigger, a necessity for the company's financial growth, will be hard for Facebook, as we discussed. Facebook has seen fast adaptation in developing nations. But gains in those less developed markets is less lucrative than the user-base here. Trading users here for ones there doesn't even out.

### Why Is Facebook's User Satisfaction Plummeting?

A new survey suggests Facebookers are increasingly unhappy with big changes to Mark Zuckerberg's social network, while rival Google+ is pleasing its fans

In a worrisome sign for Facebook, which is set to release its first quarterly earnings report as a public company next week, a new poll suggests that user satisfaction on the social network may be in a downward spiral. According to the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), users are increasingly dissatisfied with Mark Zuckerberg's social network, while competitors such as Twitter and, remarkably, Google+ fared better. Here's what you should know:

How was the survey conducted?

The annual report measures 230 companies across multiple sectors, assesses how happy customers are, and then assigns a score on a scale from 0 to 100. Facebook got a 61 this year, down from 69 in 2011 and the lowest score of the "e-companies" included in the ACSI.

Why is Facebook's popularity plummeting?

There are three big reasons, says The Huffington Post: Concerns over privacy, a frequently changing interface, and in-your-face advertising. The introduction of Timeline, in particular, seems to have Facebook users flustered.

How did the competition do?

Google+, which has been disparaged as an unpopular "ghost town," emerged with a "surprisingly strong score," says Fox News: 78 out of 100. The survey's administrators cite Google+'s absence of traditional advertising and what many consider to be a better mobile experience as the primary drivers behind user satisfaction. (Also, it should be noted Google+ has a much smaller user base than Facebook; arguably, only the most satisfied users have stuck with it.) Twitter had a slightly better score than Facebook at 63, and newcomer Pinterest scored a 69.

How did social networks do compared to other industries?

Badly. On average, social networks are consistently among the lowest ranked industries, beating out only airlines, subscription television service, and newspapers.

What does all this mean for Facebook?

Facebook should feel pressure to improve customer satisfaction right away, says Larry Freed, whose analytics company, ForeSee, partnered with ACSI to release this survey. "It's got to hurt Mark Zuckerberg's ego to see another low rating, considering the company's mantra is about making users happy over advertisers," says Donna Tam at CNET.

#### Test Firefox OS on a Desktop Computer with New B2G Nightly Builds

Mozilla is creating a new kind of mobile operating system that is aligned with standards-based Web technologies. The platform, called Firefox OS, consists of the Gecko HTML rendering engine, a thin hardware enablement layer built on the Linux kernel, and a user interface layer called Gaia that is implemented entirely in HTML and JavaScript.

The project was first announced in 2011 with the codename Boot2Gecko (B2G). It has matured considerably since then and is expected to arrive on handsets next year. Developers who want to get a head start will be pleased to learn that Mozilla has started producing daily builds of a B2G test environment that runs on conventional desktop computers.

These builds provide an x86-compatible B2G runtime for testing the Gaia shell and applications that are built for the platform. It's a useful tool for Gaia contributors and for third-party developers who want to start building applications that are compatible with B2G. The builds are available for download from the Mozilla FTP server.

Users will have to do a little bit of configuration in order to run the software. The process involves obtaining the latest Gaia code from the GitHub repository and generating a profile to use in the environment. The steps to follow are documented on the Gaia Hacking page of the Mozilla Wiki. After I set up a profile, I was able to get the latest B2G nightly build running with Gaia on Mac OS X.

It's important to note that the platform is still a work in progress and that the core application stack is under heavy development. What you see when you run the nightly isn't really indicative yet of what the final user experience will be like. For more details, you can refer to a blog post that Mozilla's Tony Chung published yesterday about the nightly builds.

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